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SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE NEWS

REGION 4

COMPRISING STATES OF LOUISIANA, ARKANSAS,
OKLAHOMA AND TEXAS, EXCEPT HIGH PLAINS AREA

REGIONAL OFFICE--FORT WORTH, TEXAS

VOL. V

MARCH 1939

NO. 3

NEW SUB-AREA OFFICE LOCATED AT MARFA

A new field office of the Soil Conservation Service to supervise its activities in the 21,000,000-acre Trans-Pecos Area of Southwest Texas has been established at Marfa, Texas.

The new unit will be known as the Trans-Pecos Sub-Area office and as such will operate as a sub-division of the Edwards Plateau Area office now located at San Angelo.

Present and future activities of the Service centered in El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Reeves, Jeff Davis, Presidio, Brewster, Pecos, and Terrell counties, all west of the Pecos River, and Loving and Ward counties will be supervised from the Marfa office.

One of the work units to be supervised from Marfa will be the Toyah Creek Watershed water facilities project approved recently for operations in the 630,000-acre watershed lying in Reeves, Pecos and Jeff Davis counties. Headquarters for this water facilities project has been set up at Balnearia.

George M. Morris, soil conservationist, former project manager for the Service at Macgloches and recently in charge of a flood control survey on the Concho River at San Angelo, has been put in charge of the Marfa office.

Other members of the staff who also have been engaged in flood control survey work prior to this time are: Roy H. Gough, associate soil conservationist, former project manager at Vernon; C. A. Tidwell, acting sub-area range examiner; C. A. Reagan, formerly at the Madisonville CCC Camp, to be agricultural engineer; J. T. Moon, soils surveyor, and Ralph W. O'Neal, clerk.

Establishment of the Marfa office increases the number of area offices in Texas to seven, others being located at Vernon, Dublin, Temple, Tyler, San Antonio and San Angelo.

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COVER CROP CONTROLS EROSION, INCREASES YIELDS

Vetch, planted as a winter cover crop to control erosion and to enrich the soil doubled the corn production in 1938 on a field on the farm of L. H. McBryde one mile east of Palmyra, Ark., Mr. McBryde said recently.

Mr. McBryde explained that he harvested an average of 24 bushels of corn per acre on land which had benefited from vetch and that land on which no vetch had been grown produced an average of only 12 bushels of corn per acre.

Three and one-half acres of land planted to cotton in 1937 produced only one-half bale of cotton, Mr McBryde said. He planted vetch on this field in September 1937 to improve the soil and to protect the land from the erosive action of heavy winter and spring rains. The growth was turned under for soil improvement in April 1938 and corn planted on the land. The average per acre corn yield was 24 bushels.

The adjacent land which produced an average of only 12 bushels of corn per acre had the same slope and was of the same soil type and degree of erosion, Mr. McBryde declared. It did not, he added, have the benefit of a cover crop of vetch preceding the corn.

"During the summer months the corn on land where vetch had been turned under was dark green in color, the soil was loose and mellow and was much easier to work," declared Mr. McBryde. "The other corn was light yellow in color.

"I want to double the amount of acres planted to vetch each year until I have all the cultivated land on my 115-acre farm planted to this legume if row crops are to be grown," he said.

Mr. McBryde is receiving the assistance of Soil Conservation Service technicians assigned to the Lower East Saline Soil Conservation District in installing a complete and coordinated conservation system on his farm.

The pasture area on this farm has been increased from 10 to 31 acres. Under the new system of farm operation adopted by Mr. McBryde, the area in woods has been reduced from 46 to 24 acres.

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REGION 4 CONSERVATION PROGRESS LISTED

As of January 31, 1939, more than 10,411 farmers who own or operate 1,721,420 acres of land located within the work areas of Soil Conservation projects and camps in Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas (except the High Plains) had installed, or were establishing, complete and coordinated soil and water conservation systems on their farms.

Conservation systems have been completely established on 4,918 or the 10,411 farms. Completed farms embrace a total land area of 760,742 acres. In addition conservation work has been completed on 1,059,590 acres in the remaining 5,493 farms although work has not been completed on all fields of these farms.

The following tabulation shows the division of progress by states and camps and projects:

Location	No. of Agree- ments	Acres in Agree- ments	No. of farms com- pleted	Acres in complet- ed farms	Acres in complet- ed fields
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Projects:					
Arkansas	1,090	135,066	413	70,181	89,395
Louisiana	813	123,627	505	77,060	97,935
Texas	1,420	196,576	1,058	189,542	153,681
Project Total	3,353	455,269	1,976	276,783	341,011
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Camps:					
Arkansas	2,291	351,909	746	100,854	178,872
Louisiana	1,497	301,135	465	80,287	140,477
Texas	3,360	613,107	1,731	302,813	399,230
Camp Total	7,058	1,266,151	2,942	483,959	718,579
Project and Camp Total	10,411	1,721,420	4,918	760,742	1,059,590
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IDLE LAND IS CONVERTED TO MEADOW

Twenty acres of land formerly idle on the farm of Lawson E. Davis of Minden, La., last year produced 1,050 bales of lespedeza hay valued at \$525. The land had been converted to meadow to prevent erosion and to provide an outlet for water from an adjoining terraced field.

"I believe my lespedeza meadow is the most valuable piece of property I have on my farm," Mr. Davis declared. "In fact I believe it is worth twice as much as any other piece of land the same size."

In planning his farm, with the assistance of technicians from the Minden Project of the Soil Conservation Service, Mr. Davis said he was confronted with the problem of finding a safe drain on which he could outlet terrace water.

"There was a drain running through this field with a narrow strip of land on each side of it that had been producing little or no returns," Mr. Davis continued. "The land bordering this drain had small gullies in it and had not been cultivated for a number of years, because it was too wet. It was covered with small bushes and briars.

"Since there was a shortage of hay on my farm it was decided to make a meadow of this idle land along the drain and to use the meadow for a waterway for the run-off water from the terraces on the 130-acre field above" he continued. "This meadow is a part of a complete and coordinated conservation program on my farm."

In the spring of 1937 the bushes and briars were cut and the ground was leveled so a mower could be used. The meadow was seeded with sudan grass at the rate of 20 pounds per acre, because it was then too late to plant lespedeza. Several hundred bales of sudan hay were harvested that year.

"In the early spring of 1938 this meadow was seeded at the rate of 20 pounds of lespedeza and 20 pounds of Dallis grass per acre," Mr. Davis recalled. "A very good stand was obtained, and in August I cut and baled 1,050 bales of good quality lespedeza hay."

Although the hay had a market price of 50 cents a bale, Mr. Davis is feeding it to his cattle and work stock.

"It should be remembered," Mr. Davis said, "that this hay was obtained from land that was producing nothing at all before it was seeded to meadow. It also serves as a waterway to handle drainage water from 130 acres of cultivated land.

"Since the growing of feed is such a big problem in this section, we are going to have to use every good method we can find to meet our feed needs," he continued. "A good meadow will go a long way toward helping solve this problem."

Mr. Davis' 350-acre farm is situated in the northern part of Bienville Parish on the Minden-Ringgold Highway.

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DISTRICT PROGRESS IN ARKANSAS

A total of 1,203 Arkansas farmers owning or operating 152,655 acres of land situated in the 10 operating districts in the state on March 1 had entered into cooperative agreements with their respective boards of supervisors and had started the establishment of complete and coordinated soil and water conservation farming programs on their lands.

District supervisors announced that individual plans for 109 other farms covering 14,066 acres had been completed. Farm plans were being prepared for 145 additional farms with a total acreage of 24,201 acres.

Conservation surveys had been completed by March 1 on 1,370,066 acres in the 10 districts.

The total number of farmers filing applications with their respective boards of supervisors for assistance in installing erosion control and water conservation practices on their farms had increased to 3,279 on the first of the month. The total as of January 1, 1939, was 2,932.

In February, 1,464 farmers and others in the districts attended 51 educational meetings. Six meetings were held with groups of farmers in planning and program execution. Sixty-seven persons attended these conferences. Supervisors in nine districts held meetings during February.

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NEW ARKANSAS LAND USE PROJECT APPROVED

Approval of the South Central Arkansas land use project covering 880,000 acres of land located in parts of Columbia, Nevada, Ouachita and Union counties, has been announced by Dr. H. H. Bennett, Chief of the Service. Certain sub-marginal lands within the project area will be purchased, taken out of cultivation and devoted to more profitable uses.

The new project is located in a foothill section where the continuous growing of cotton has led to severe erosion and lowered standards of living. Many gullied cotton fields which were taken out of cultivation years ago are now covered with second growth timber. Thousands of other eroded acres, however, are still being farmed although the operators have little or no chance to produce a profitable crop.

The aim of the project is to develop a type of agriculture better suited to natural conditions. The Soil Conservation Service will purchase some of the more severely impoverished lands and retire them from cultivation to pasture or forest.

-SCS-

SUB-MARGINAL LAND PROJECT ADDED IN OKLAHOMA

Approval of a new sub-marginal land purchase and development project in McCurtain County Oklahoma has been announced by Dr. H. H. Bennett, Chief of the Service. The new project is located in a rough, hilly area in the southeastern part of Oklahoma.

Severely eroded lands, unsuited for cultivation, will be purchased and retired to grazing and forest uses.

Cutting of the original timber, and the subsequent depletion and erosion of soil placed in cultivation, have produced a serious social and economic problem in this area, Doctor Bennett said. The land is thickly settled despite the poverty of the soil, farms averaging only 85 acres. With insufficient acreage to adapt a type of farming based upon pasture and livestock, farmers in the area have concentrated upon cotton and corn, both soil depleting crops. From 1928 to 1936, cotton yields averaged only 75 pounds to the acre. And the average corn yield was less than 10 bushels.

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SCHULENBURG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WRITES
PRIZE WINNING CONSERVATION ESSAY

Essays dealing with erosion and soil and water conservation were written by 77 high school students from Schulenburg, Weimar, LaGrange and Fayetteville, Texas during American Education Week.

The contest was sponsored by the Schulenburg Chamber of Commerce and the McBride Post of the American Legion. During the week's observance 126 members of the Future Farmers of America visited the work area of the Schulenburg CCC Camp and saw motion pictures depicting erosion damage and practices to control erosion.

First prize of \$5 was won by John Bunjes, a Schulenburg high school student.

Parts of the prize winning essay follow:

ESSAY ON SOIL EROSION
by
John Bunjes

The soil is the heritage of man, the greatest possession of the human race. The soil is our oldest known substance, for more ancient than our forests and plant life. In it we find the secret of all wild life, the cradle of nature, and resting place of the fallen plant. Once wasted it can never be replaced, and so as generations of man have come on down through the ages, the preserving of the soil has been studied by the people.

As a nation the United States has only in recent years caught the full significance and importance of soil conservation. No longer is there new land across the mountains in which new crops can be started. Not until recently have we found this out, and realize that our old land must be preserved and cared for. We find in this country that only about one-fourth of the land has escaped erosion of some kind. Records show us that fifty million acres of land has been ruined because the soil has washed away. Besides this millions of acres have received severe damage. Because of the millions of acres of damage the sheet, gully and wind erosion does, it is estimated

that it costs the government 400 million dollars annually. When we look at this situation we can understand why the people of America are beginning to be conscious of this fact, and are taking steps to remedy it.

What is soil erosion? It means that the soil is being removed by natural agencies, mainly wind and water. This erosion is constantly in opposition to the slow process of soil formation.

Erosion is in reality so slow that we, the people of so large a nation, have failed to see it. On the other hand some of the earlier Americans, great in American history have seen and understood the meaning of soil erosion. Washington, Madison, and Jefferson are a few of these. Even today the fields of these men are in good condition.

Erosion is taking place in every part of the country. The main reason is the fact that most of the land is hilly, and the farmers have a habit of plowing straight rows, whether up or down hill. Because of this the soil is quickly running into our rivers.

When a person reads about what soil erosion has done, and will do, that person wonders what man has done, and is doing, to prevent it. In the first place erosion control is as old as agriculture itself, but not until recently could it be called a science. Much is being done to prevent erosion. Agriculture experiment stations in all parts of the world are combating erosion. Our two biggest helpers in our war against soil erosion are the Soil Conservation Service and CCC projects. These two are by far doing the greatest work to stop soil erosion.

It has long been known that terraces are useful to prevent soil erosion. Even at this, people are just learning how far apart terraces should be spaced, how much fall they should have, and how to get rid of terrace water without permitting it to get back into the field. Erosion at outlets has been a serious problem.

From nature we learn that close growing vegetation is the most effective thing known for preventing soil erosion. Experiments show us that well sodded pastures permit but little water and soil to escape. From this, strip crops have been used as effective substitutes for terraces. Strip crops may be defined as level bands of thick growing plants spaced at intervals on cultivated slopes. Perennial plants which are thick growing make the best strip crops, because they give protection to the soil twelve months a year. Small grains are next as a useful strip crop. Sorghum, alfalfa, clover, and close growing fibrous-rooted plants are good strip crops.

In a few short words, careful planning of the farm is the whole secret of preventing soil erosion. A complete program for every farm in the United States must be made if soil erosion is to be stopped.

A complete program for every farm could be seen in ten points.

1. The establishment of a systematic crop rotation on each field.
2. A system of strip cropping on all clean-cultivated fields whether terraced or not.
3. Practicing of contour farming on all rolling fields.
4. Terracing of good farm lands with slopes of from two to eight percent.
5. Protect all grass and woodlands from fire.
6. Plant winter cover crops to protect soil when it is not in use.
7. Carry out gully control plans.
8. Carry out a systematic pasture management plan.
9. Do not cultivate badly eroded land, but plant grass or timber on it.
10. Construct some kind of farm reservoirs to transfer the surplus water from field and pasture lands.

Soil conservation means the difference between prosperity and poverty, and between an American standard or an inadequate standard of living in the future. Which will it be?

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COMPLETE THE ADDITION OF OKLAHOMA TO REGION 4

The addition of Oklahoma, with the exception of the Panhandle counties, to Region 4 of the Service was completed early this month when some of the employees formerly attached to the Region 7 office at Salina, Kansas, were transferred to Fort Worth.

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ONE LOUISIANA DISTRICT GRANTED ASSISTANCE

The Department of Agriculture has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the supervisors of the Feliciana State Soil Conservation District in Louisiana making it possible for personnel from the Soil Conservation Service to assist farmers within the district in controlling erosion on their lands.

The Feliciana District is the first in the state to be approved for Service assistance. The district covers approximately 829,572 acres of land in parts of East and West Feliciana parishes and East Baton Rouge and St. Helena parishes.

Six other districts in Louisiana have completed programs and work plans and have requested assistance from the Service. They are: Upper Sabine, Dorchest-Bodcau, Upper Red River, Pearl River, D'Arbonne and Saline Districts.

-SCS-

FIELD OFFICES SET UP FOR TEXAS
WATER FACILITIES PROJECTS

Field headquarters are being set up this month for seven new water facilities projects recently approved for operations in Texas.

The following points have been selected for field offices:

Toyah Creek Watershed project: headquarters, Balmerhea; Zacharias E. Dannon, formerly at San Angelo, in charge.

Atascosa River Watershed project: headquarters, Pleasanton; John W. Herring formerly at Harrison, Arkansas, in charge.

Elm Creek Watershed project: headquarters, Uvalde; Jack D. Everheart, formerly at Tri-River District, Pochontas, Arkansas, in charge.

Spring and Dove Creeks and South Concho Watershed project: Headquarters, San Angelo; Dudley T. Mann, formerly at Temple, in charge.

Brady Creek Watershed and Mustang, Salt, Elm, Cow,
Cedar and Corn Creek Watersheds project: headquarters, Brady.
Gus A. Lehmann, formerly at Garland, in charge.

Big Elm, Mulberry, Noodle, Bitter, Dead Man's and
Cedar Creek Watersheds project: headquarters, Abilene.
Raymond C. Reed, formerly at Sherman, in charge.

Dockum, Duck and Croton Watersheds project: headquarters,
Spur. Elton D. Cook, formerly at Mount Pleasant, in charge.

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